

Your guide to using Devon Home Choice



Under the Devon Home Choice scheme, finding a home is easier. It gives you greater opportunity to find a home of your choice in Devon



Welcome to Devon Home Choice

About Devon Home Choice

Devon Home Choice is a way of looking for council and housing association homes.

Under Devon Home Choice you can:

- Choose which homes interest you
- Move within Devon

This guide explains how:

- To join the Devon Home Choice register
- To find information on available homes
- To express interest in homes (bidding)
- The successful applicant is selected

Please Note:

There are far more people seeking council and housing association homes in Devon than there are homes available.

Even if you are assessed as having a high priority for housing it may take you a long time to find a council or housing association home.

Need more help?

If you need more help or would like information on your housing options please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon where you would like to live. The contact details are listed on page 14.

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How to use Devon Home Choice

Step 1: Register

How to register

The easiest way to join the Devon Home Choice register is to visit www.devonhomechoice.com and click on the online application form.

If you are not able to apply online please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon you would like to live.

For your application to be processed and accepted you need to:

- Complete the application form
- Provide any extra information requested on the application form or by the local housing team in the area of Devon where you would like to live once they have received your application

What size of homes will you be able to bid for?

You are only able to bid for homes that match your household needs. For example, if you only need 2 bedrooms you will not usually be able to bid for 3 or 4 bedroom homes.

The following will usually be assessed as requiring a bedroom:

- People living together as a couple
- Other adults, aged 16 years old or over
- 2 children (under 16 years old) of the same gender
- A boy & girl who are both under 8 years old

Any exceptions to these rules will be clearly set out in the advert for a home.



visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

How are applications prioritised?

All applications to join the Devon Home Choice register will be assessed and placed in 1 of 5 priority bands. Within each band, applications will be placed in date order. The date used is your band start date. This shows how long you have had that housing need.

More than 1 need for housing?

If you have more than 1 need this will be recognised as follows:

- If you have 2 or more needs from different bands your application will be placed in the highest band
- If you have 2 needs from the same band you will receive a 6 month advance on your band start date, to recognise the additional need
- If you have 3 or more needs from the same band your application will be placed in the next higher band

Emergency	High
Emergency Housing Need (A) <p>Your application will only be placed in this band if your need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that you must take priority over all other applicants. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have an urgent health/ wellbeing need • Your home is in a state of emergency disrepair • You need to move to escape violence or threat of violence, harassment or a traumatic event <p>Substantial evidence must exist to award this priority.</p>	High Housing Need (B) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Devon council has accepted that you are statutorily homeless • You are threatened with homelessness and have been placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category by a Devon council • You are overcrowded and lack 2 or more bedrooms • You are a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord and are seeking to move to a home that is at least 2 bedrooms smaller • You have been assessed as having a high health/ wellbeing need • Your home has been assessed as being in a state of high disrepair • You have been assessed as ready to move on from supported housing • You are an agricultural worker who needs to move on from tied accommodation

For full details of the Devon Home Choice policy please see www.devonhomechoice.com

Medium	Low	No
Medium Housing Need (C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom You are a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord and are seeking to move to a home that is 1 bedroom smaller You have been assessed as having a medium health/ wellbeing need Your home has been assessed as being in a state of medium disrepair You live above the 3rd floor with children aged under 8 You need to move for work in Devon, where you would otherwise need to travel more than 30 miles (each way) from home to your place of work 	Low Housing Need (D) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have been assessed as non priority and/or intentionally homeless by a Devon local authority You have been assessed as having a low health/ wellbeing need Your home has been assessed as being in a state of low disrepair You share facilities, such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen You have parental responsibility for a child/ children who stay with you regularly, where the child/ children normally lives in another area You have received a valid notice to quit from your landlord You have a housing need but have no local connection to Devon You have been assessed as having deliberately worsened your circumstances 	No Housing Need (E) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From your application it has been assessed that you are adequately housed



How to use Devon Home Choice

Moving between bands

If your circumstances change and your application moves to a higher band because your housing need has increased, your band start date will change to the date you advised us of the change in your circumstances.

If you move down to a lower band, because your need for housing has reduced you will keep the same band start date.

What happens once you have registered?

When your application to the Devon Home Choice is accepted we will write to you to confirm:

- What band your application has been placed in, and the reason for this
- Your band start date
- The size of home that you are eligible to bid for

You must tell us if there are any changes in your circumstances. Any change may affect your housing need and the priority your application should be awarded. We will then reassess your application. If necessary we will change your band and band start date.

Step 2: Choose

How are homes advertised?

Homes are advertised each week:

- On the internet at www.devonhomechoice.com
- In a newsletter that is available in a variety of locations
- On digital interactive TV
- On web enabled mobile phones
- On the Nintendo Wii.

Homes will be advertised from 12:00am on Wednesday to 12:00pm the following Monday. You can bid for up to 3 homes during this time.

No homes are advertised and no bids can be placed on a Tuesday.

The adverts

The adverts tell you the landlord, location, size, rent and other features of the home.

The advert also tells you if there are any special requirements that the applicant must meet. For example any minimum age if it is older persons accommodation, or whether a local connection to a particular area in Devon is required.







Where homes have been adapted, adverts will make clear that priority will be given to applicants who have a mobility need or disability.









visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

What do the symbols mean?

The symbols that appear on the adverts tell you about a home and about any restrictions on who is able to bid for it.

	The number of bedrooms in this home (for example 4 bedrooms)
	This home is only available to people above a certain age (for example 16 years old)
	This home is only available to people below a certain age (for example 75 years old)
	This home has off street parking
	This home has a garden or communal garden
	This home is sheltered accommodation

	A local connection is required for this home
	This home is fully wheelchair accessible
	This home is partly wheelchair accessible
	This is a lifetime home. It is accessible and adaptable.
	This home is step free
	This home has no more than 3 steps

On the website if you place the cursor over a symbol it will tell you what it means.

visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

Bidding for homes on the website

www.devonhomechoice.com

Expressing your interest in a home (bidding)

You can tell us which homes you would like to be considered for. This is called bidding.

Bidding does not mean that you will part with any money. You can only bid for homes if your application has been accepted onto the Devon Home Choice register.

You can bid for up to 3 homes each week. You can bid:

- On the website www.devonhomechoice.com
- By telephone **0300 011 0125**
- On digital interactive TV (Sky, Virgin and broadband enabled Freeview)
- Via web enabled mobile phone or Nintendo Wii
- In person at Council offices

In order to bid for homes you will need:

- Your personal reference number
- Your date of birth

You can only bid for homes where you match what the advert asks for.

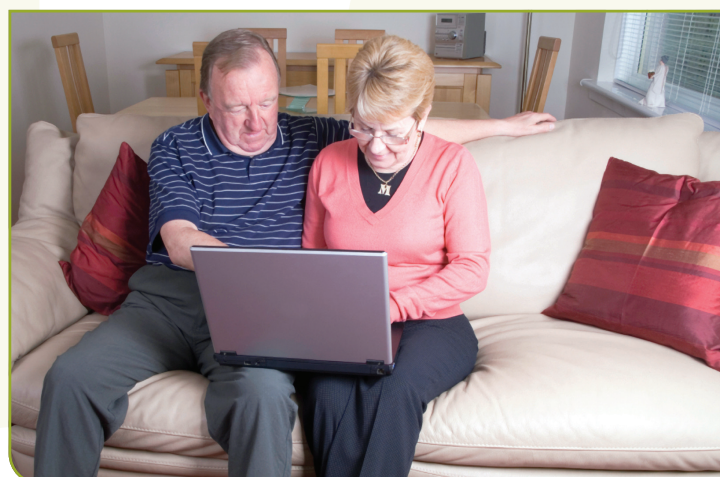
For example, if the advert states the home has 1 bedroom, you will not be able to bid for it if you need more than 1 bedroom.

Bidding on the website

www.devonhomechoice.com

1. Type www.devonhomechoice.com in the address bar of your internet browser
2. Click the **Login/My Account** button. Enter your personal reference number and your date of birth. This needs to be entered as follows: dd/mm/yyyy. For example if your date of birth is 9 May 1970 you would enter 09/05/1970.

3. Click the **Property Search** option to look for current available homes.
4. A list of homes matching your search request will be displayed. If you are eligible to bid for a home the **Apply Now** button will be displayed.
5. If you are eligible and want to bid for the home click the **Apply Now** button. Before you confirm your bid, you can find out what position you would be in the queue for a home. Your position could change as other people bid. If you are not eligible to bid for a home then the reason for this will be displayed.
6. If you decide you want to remove a bid select the button called **My Bids**. You can withdraw a bid by following the on-screen instructions. You can re-use that bid for another home.



visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

Bidding for homes on the phone

Bidding on the phone

The number to call to place a bid is **0300 011 0125**.

The cost of calling this number is the same as calling standard landlines, even from a mobile phone. If you are calling from a mobile phone the number will be included in any inclusive call minutes that you have.

Through the telephone system you can:

- Find out if you are eligible to bid for a home
- Place a bid or withdraw a bid
- Find out what your current queue position is. This may change as other people bid.

In order to bid using the telephone system you will need the reference numbers of the home(s) you want to bid for, as well as your personal reference number and date of birth.

Once you have dialled the number you will hear an automated voice. This will give you instructions on how to bid. Follow these instructions exactly and your bid(s) will be registered with us.

You will need to use the numbers on the telephone keypad and the hash key (#).

For example you will be asked to: "Please enter your personal reference number, followed by the hash key."

If your personal reference number is 1245 you would enter:



Before you confirm your bid, you can find out what position you would be in the queue for a home.



visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

Bidding on Digital Interactive TV, Web enabled mobile phones and Nintendo Wii

If you have Sky TV, Virgin Media or Freeview which is connected to broadband it is easy to find Devon Home Choice on the Looking Local service using your TV remote control.

On Looking Local you can find a range of useful local government services. Looking Local is free to use and available 24 hours a day.

Please note that to use the Looking Local service:

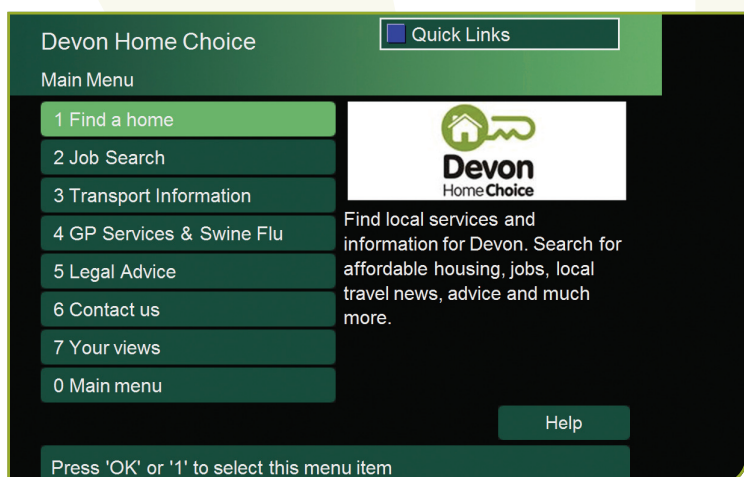
- If you are a Sky subscriber your box must be connected to a phone line
- If you use Freeview your box must be connected to broadband

If you are Virgin subscriber you will be able to access the Looking Local service as your box is connected to cable.

You can also find Devon Home Choice on Looking Local using a web enabled mobile phone or a Nintendo Wii

Access to mobile Internet will be charged at your standard rate.

You can only bid for homes where you match what the advert asks for.



visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

Pathways to the Devon Home Choice service on Looking Local



Sky



- Press the Interactive button
- Select Directgov [8]
- Press 'Select' on the Welcome Page
- Select Local Services [1]
- Southern England [3], South West [4], Devon Home Choice

Virgin



- Press the Interactive button
- Select News & Info
- Select Looking Local
- Southern England [3], South West [4], Devon Home Choice

Wii



- Insert the following url into your browser:
www.lookinglocal.gov.uk/DevonHomeChoice/

Mobile

- Via any web enabled phone:
www.lookinglocal.gov.uk/DevonHomeChoice/



visit: www.devonhomechoice.com

How to use Devon Home Choice

Step 3: How the successful applicant is selected

At the end of each weekly advertising cycle, a list of eligible bids for each advertised home will be produced. The list will order applicants by:

- The band that their application has been placed in
- How long they have been waiting

The landlord of the home will then carry out a number of checks on the top applicant. This may include checking:

- Your circumstances have not changed from the information we hold for you
- Your rent payments are up to date
- Any anti-social behaviour
- Medical history

If you are at the top of the list you will normally be invited to view the home unless the landlord discovers reasons why you shouldn't be offered the home. For example, if you have rent arrears or have been guilty of anti-social behaviour. If the landlord is unable to offer the home to you they will move to the next applicant on the list and so on. Advice will be provided on the steps you would need to take to be considered for another home.

If you decide to refuse the home it will be offered to the next applicant on the list. You will not normally be penalised for refusing a home and will continue to be able to bid for homes. If you have been accepted as homeless by a Devon local authority you should always seek advice before refusing a home, as this could end any duty to provide you with a home.

When the home is ready you will be contacted to arrange to sign the tenancy agreement and collect the keys.



Feedback

We publish information in the newsletter and on the website about homes that have been advertised through Devon Home Choice. We tell you the number of applicants that bid for each home, the band and date of the top bidder.

This information will give you a better idea of:

- How popular a particular home or area is
- Whether you are likely to be successful in bidding for a council or housing association home
- How long you may have to wait

You can then decide whether to look for other:

- Types of home or areas where you may not have to wait as long
- Housing options, such as private renting

Example of feedback

Address	Type	No. of Beds	Band	Date	No. of Bids
A Street, Plymouth	House	2	High	08/08/2005	65
B Road, Exeter	House	3	High	21/10/2005	95
C Lane, Torquay	Flat	1	Medium	07/09/2007	34

The example shows that the top bidder for a 3 bed house in B Road, Exeter was in the High housing need band (B) and had a band start date of 21/10/2005. 95 bids were received for the house.

How to Contact Us:

East Devon District Council

(T) (01395) 517469
(E) devonhomechoice@eastdevon.gov.uk

Exeter City Council

(T) (01392) 265889
(E) devonhomechoice@exeter.gov.uk

Mid Devon District Council

(T) (01884) 255255
(E) devonhomechoice@middevon.gov.uk

North Devon Council

(T) (01271) 388870
(E) customerservices@northdevon.gov.uk

Plymouth City Council

(T) (01752) 305496
(E) devonhomechoice@plymouth.gov.uk

South Hams District Council

(T) (01803) 861234
(E) devonhomechoice@southhams.gov.uk

Teignbridge District Council

(T) (01626) 361101
(E) devonhomechoice@teignbridge.gov.uk

Torbay (about Devon Home Choice)

Riviera Housing Trust
(T) (01803) 696123
(E) devonhomechoicetorbay@sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Torbay (for housing advice)

Torbay Council
(T) (01803) 208723
(E) housing@torbay.gov.uk

Torridge District Council

(T) (01237) 428700
(E) devonhomechoice@torridge.gov.uk

West Devon Borough Council

(T) (01822) 813600
(E) devonhomechoice@westdevon.gov.uk

Is it clear?

Please contact the local housing team in the area of Devon where you would like to live if you:

- Have any questions about Devon Home Choice
- Would like help to take part in Devon Home Choice
- Need this document in another language, in large print, on audio tape or in other formats.

Devon Home Choice is a partnership between:

- Affinity Sutton
- Cornerstone
- Devon & Cornwall Housing Association
- East Devon District Council
- Exeter City Council
- Falcon Rural Housing
- Guinness Trust
- Hanover Housing Society
- Hastoe Housing Association
- Housing 21
- Jephson Housing Association
- Magna Housing Group
- Methodist Homes
- Mid Devon District Council
- North Devon Council
- North Devon Homes
- Plymouth City Council
- Plymouth Community Homes
- Raglan Housing
- Red Devon Housing
- Riviera Housing Trust
- Sanctuary Housing Association
- Sarsen Housing Association
- Signpost Housing Association
- South Devon Rural Housing Association
- South Hams District Council
- South Western Housing Society
- Sovereign South & West
- Stonham Housing Association
- Tamar Housing Society
- Tarka Housing
- Teachers' Housing Association
- Teign Housing
- Teignbridge District Council
- Torbay Council
- Tor Homes
- Torridge District Council
- Westcountry Housing Association
- West Devon Borough Council
- West Devon Homes

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